1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
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CHAPTER I

THE MURNGIN

The northern shores of Australia are separated in the east from New Guinea by the Torres Strait and the Gulf of Carpentaria, and in the west by the shallow Sea of Arafura. The Indian Ocean lies between Australia and the East Indian island of Timor. Below the Arafura is Arnhem Land, that almost blank space on the map which extends from the Gulf of Carpentaria to the Indian Ocean. In the furthermost northern and eastern parts of this latter region are several tribes which may be referred to collectively as the Murngin. Their ancestors lived here many hundreds and probably thousands of years before them.[1]

Eastern and northern Arnhem Land are unpopulated by whites except for a half dozen or more missionaries who are stationed at three comparatively recent Christian outposts. Traders infrequently sail their two-masted luggers into the shallow harbors and mouths of the tidal rivers to exchange their goods with the natives; all other economic efforts have been unprofitable. On the southern borders of this huge territory white civilization is making a melancholy and profitless effort to implant its own markings in the form of cattle ranches on the bleak country that lies along the southern banks of the Roper River. A telegraph system which unites white Australia with the rest of the British Empire stretches from the populous cities of southern Australia across the barren central desert into the western border of Arnhem Land and terminates at the tiny, isolated town of Port Darwin.

The Murngin live some ten to fifteen degrees south of the equator in a land which has little elevation. The climate is tropical and marked by the sharp, seasonal cycles of the rainy and dry periods, with corresponding changes in the prevailing winds or monsoons. The long flat coastal regions have a savanna type of vegetation, with the ubiquitous mangrove here and there forming dense jungle groves along the flat sandy islands, bays, and tidal rivers. The groves of ti trees in this region are green oases which the native sees as he journeys in from the barren

[1] See Appendix I, Social Change in North Australia.

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of them." This demonstrates clearly the strong bond between these relatives. Sometimes a waku's gawel is not galle to the waku's father except distantly. Obviously, given the above feelings, the gawel-waku relationship adds much to the strength of a clan and at the same time helps prevent trouble between the two groups. 604

If a fight developed, gawel would help waku with the loan of his spears, and, if necessary, by fighting for him. His own sons would also aid his waku, their duć. A waku is taught much of what he knows about fighting and hunting by gawel. If the older man is a magician he also teaches this art to his waku. [868]

Gawel uses waku's property, or vice versa, with the freedom of a brother or father. If gawel's wife is misbehaving, waku tries by indirect threats of death to make her conform to the tribal ideal of conduct. [626]

Sometimes a gawel promises a waku his daughter, the boy makes presents to him for a long period of time, and the gawel then refuses to give him the girl. This means trouble. Strong pressure would usually be put upon the older man to force him to give her to the boy. This might end in an interclan fight, or the waku would probably run away with her. 604 578

Another disappointing situation for waku that occasionally occurs is when a gawel says, "I'll give you the daughters from this wife." The waku makes presents over a period of time, meanwhile watching the woman to see if she is going to bear children. If she is barren or produces only sons he stops making his father-in-law presents and turns his attention to some other gawel. 604 584 431

The Australian aborigine is a most industrious trader. Articles of trade are passed over well-known trade routes for hundreds of miles and through many tribes. The Murngin and their neighbors are no exceptions to this rule. The Ritarngo and the Djinba trade stone spear heads to the seacoast tribes for red ocher and pipe clay, or for wooden spears. Ranga string is exchanged between them, as well as many other articles. The waku-gawel reciprocal is utilized for the trading. All men try to have as many distant waku as they can. Presents are constantly being exchanged between the two, not to acquire material wealth so much as to extend a man's sphere of influence beyond the nearby clans. It pleases a Murngin to have a present sent from a distant people and adds greatly to his social prestige. It also gives him a greater feeling of safety when traveling, to know that he has a waku or gawel with whom he has this trading relationship. Waku and gawel often visit each other and their behavior demonstrates real friendship when they meet. 439 438 604 431 554 574

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Everything that can be digested is eaten, but nothing is done with bone or shell. When the Malays were trading with the natives the shell was exchanged for Malay products.

A man who goes turtle harpooning usually takes three or four men with him to paddle the canoe. He is considered the leader, but helps with the paddling while looking for turtle. The canoe goes beyond the breakwater out into the open sea. Along the sand beaches a goodly number of these animals can be found swimming in to shore to lay their eggs. When the head of the turtle is sighted all the oarsmen paddle as rapidly and silently as possible. They hold their heads and bodies down as low as possible so as not to be seen. When the canoe gets within range the harpooner articulates his harpoon to his spear-thrower and aims it just back of the turtle's head. If he strikes, the turtle dives, taking the head of the harpoon with the rope following to the sea bottom. The rope is held on to if it is possible; if not, it is picked up again when the animal rises sufficiently to bring the rope within reach. When the turtle comes up for air he is sometimes speared again, once more goes down, and the rope again held. When the rope becomes slack and it is felt that the turtle has tired itself, a man jumps overboard, puts his hands at the side of the turtle and attempts to turn it on its back. When he has it in this position the other men pull up on the rope. They catch hold of the turtle's legs and pull it on board. It is then hit on the head with a club. This has to be done carefully because a bite in a vulnerable spot would probably result in death.

Eggs of three species of turtle are eaten. Buckingham and Arnhem Bays are supposed to furnish the largest supply. Nests of crocodiles are sought out along the swampy river banks and their eggs gathered and eaten.

Sharks and crocodiles are harpooned, but usually speared. The backbone of a crocodile is chopped in back of the hind legs to sever the tail and to prevent its striking the hunter. When a sting ray is speared its tail is held in the mouth to prevent the fish's barbed prong from striking the spearsman while he is killing it.

The shallow rock bottoms along the seacoast or the white sand bottoms of the long low beaches where the water is knee to waist deep are the favorite fishing places. A spear-thrower is nearly always used with a fish spear.

Poison is sometimes used to stupefy fish, which then float in the water until gathered in. Dangi, an unidentified vegetable product, is

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population occupied a site for the entire year. No Malay women were allowed to accompany the men on their southern voyages. With the exception of the tamarind tree and possibly the bamboo, no flora of the East Indies were deliberately transplanted to the northern coast of Australia. The Malays did not engage in any form of agriculture here. Although they brought rice for trade with the aborigines, none was ever planted by them or the natives. It may be possible that two cocoanut palm trees reported by the natives of the Kolpa clan of Cape Wessel Island were planted by the western trader, but it is also possible that the two trees sprouted from cocoanuts carried in by the tides, which bring hundreds of these nuts to the shores of northern Arnhem Land.[9]

The Malay traders made these long trips from their native islands to Australia because they wanted to acquire the native pearl shell, pearls, tortoise shell, trepang, and sandal wood, found all along the shores of North Australia. The natives received in return dugout canoes, rice, molasses, tobacco, cloth for sarongs, belts, knives, tomahawks, gin, and pipes, as well as other articles of trade. The Malay did not come to establish outposts of his civilization and promote agriculture, nor had he any desire to proselytize the aborigines to worship his gods; he came to trade for highly valued articles on which the natives placed little value, and when he had accomplished his purpose he was glad to go home to Macassar, Koepang, or Timor Laut. Consequently he had little effect on the native civilization or its racial stock.

The various head men of the coastal clans were made "kings" by Malay traders. Usually the brother of the "king" was also made a "king" to assist his older brother—apparently a Malay adaptation of native custom, since the ceremonial leader of a clan usually has his younger brother to assist him. The head men were put in charge of their clansmen in the trepang expeditions. Friendships grew up between various Malays and aborigines to the extent that the black fathers took their young sons down to the Malay boats and pointed out the men who were to be their trading friends when they were grown up. This indicates a tendency to organize the trade on the basis of the patrilineal line, which again shows that the Malays did not attempt to change native civilization, but merely adapted themselves to the native social institutions.

The gin traded to the natives caused occasional great drunken orgies, and much blood was shed in interclan fights that came to a head under this alcoholic stimulation. However, the alcohol seems to have had no effect upon the general well-being of the people.

[9] The ocean currents are exceptionally rapid in the Arafura Sea and the distances of no great length from cocoanut-growing areas, which makes it highly possible that of the tens of thousands of nuts washed ashore through the years, two of them might have taken root. Recent researches have shown that cocoanuts can remain in sea water for a considerable period of time without losing their germinating power.

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175 Many of the black men went back to the Malay country with the returning fleets and stayed through the intervening season. There are a few cases of men who stayed permanently and married Malay women, but this was very rare.

The Malays also bought spears and spear-throwers from the blacks, but it is likely that this was done in modern times because of their interest in them as mementos rather than weapons.

175 177 439 438 The trade with the Malays seems to have been purely on a basis of exchange, with very little else in its social content. Nevertheless, it had little effect on the aboriginal ideas of trade. The Murngin trade is fairly extensive. The native sometimes exchanges things he possesses for the things he needs and cannot get from his own territory; but the larger basis of trade in northeastern Arnhem Land is one of social reciprocity which establishes a social bond between the traders and enlarges the social periphery of each. A trade between two people is considerably ritualized, and may be an exchange of the same objects, such as carved spears, spear-throwers, or baskets.

All this again shows the strong resistance of the Murngin culture to outside influence. The Malay trader came for an exchange of goods and nothing else; and it would be thought that, in the hundreds of years he is likely to have been in Arnhem Land, he would have given a new impetus to Murngin ideas of exchange. But as far as can be determined, the Murngin ideas are no different from what they were before he arrived, since the trade life fits into the general setting of their culture. Further, this system of exchange is no different from that of the interior tribes, and it is still not a matter of pure economics, but is of more significance to the social and ritualistic life of the people.

175 177 *Malay Influence on the Aboriginal Material Culture.*—Although the influence of the Malay was of no great importance, nevertheless it had considerable influence upon certain aspects of the material culture of the tribes who occupied the coastal plains along the Arafura Sea and the western shores of the Gulf of Carpentaria.

In brief, the Malay introduced the dugout canoe, its mast and pandanus sail, the Malay type of pipe, a fashion for cutting the beard in a kind of Van Dyke style, and an appreciation for iron and other metals. It is possible the tides had carried in wooden planks with metal on them before the Malay arrived in Australia, for at the present time the natives often find planks with nails, which they extract and use for fish hooks. The tomahawk was also brought into North Australia and became a part of the native culture, partly supplanting, along the coast, the ground stone axe. It was, of course, not made by the Australians. The technique of grinding a stone axe is still known by the men of these tribes. The metal axes did not come in sufficient number to supply all the needs of the

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177 501 one voyage, for it quickly becomes unfit for use, because of the cracking and warping of the bark. Since it does not become a permanent part of a man's possessions it is not an added responsibility and care, as is the case with the dugout canoe. The material for the dugout canoe is difficult to get, the trees used are frequently a considerable distance from the inland rivers or the sea, and it involves the labor of a number of men to transport the canoe from its place of manufacture to the water. The rarity of the material adds to the value of the canoe. The labor involved and the organization of the labor contribute their share to increasing the canoe's value to the native owner; consequently an aborigine who possesses a dugout canoe feels a considerable responsibility for its safety and upkeep, and the canoe gives him a relationship with his immediate environment which is permanent and will not allow him to make his decisions with the ease that he would if he did not feel the necessity of taking care of his property.

177 501 439 To sum up, the bark canoe fits into the general pattern of Murngin behavior. The Murngin is not particularly interested in his material culture and would rather not be disturbed by its burdens and responsibilities. The manufacture and possession of a dugout canoe obviously do not fit into the general scheme of things as does the bark canoe. It is highly probable that the tardy and partial acceptance of the dugout in Murngin culture is due to the above set of causes. When the Malays supplied the canoes ready-made and they could be acquired each season for turtle shell that was saved during the dry season, or for pearls that the native found while eating his oysters, the burden of making the canoe and the great responsibility of ownership were not felt. The turtle shell and pearls were worthless to the native, so that if a man lost his canoe he could replace it without any effort and without loss of any property that he valued. As a result, while the Malays supplied them ready-made the natives used them, but when the Malay supply was gone the bark canoe once more returned to partial use.

177 501 The dugout finally became a trait in Murngin material culture because a man has a better chance of harpooning a turtle, dugong, or shark in the comparatively firm footing supplied by a dugout than he has from the unsubstantial bark canoe. Several informants who were excellent sea hunters declared that this was the reason they used the dugout instead of the older bark canoe.

The canoe mast and the pandanus sail are but two parts of one general invention, since the former is a mechanical device used to articulate the latter to a dugout canoe. The technical equipment to make a mast was already in the hands of the native, since he is an expert carver. The ability he shows in the manufacture of his carved totemic emblems demonstrates this fact. The mast is a very simple object to make; what is more important, it takes but a few minutes and can be discarded when it has

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how to make it. There was no arduous labor attached to collecting turtle shell to trade for an axe, for the shell came as a by-product to the pursuit of harpooning turtles. The making of the stone axe took time and a considerable amount of hard labor; but to go turtle hunting was a pleasure, since turtle harpooning expeditions are not only for the anticipated enjoyment of the flesh and to supply the family larder, but also for the pure joy of stalking the turtle, spearing it, and bringing it home to an admiring audience which could appreciate one's abilities as a hunter and a man of importance. Undoubtedly pride of workmanship is felt by a native axe-maker. His fellow tribesmen always express their appreciation of a well-turned-out axe or spear head, but the social approbation given to the two occupations is completely disproportionate.

The turtle shell had never been used, and had been discarded until the Malay came; that it should become an article of high value to the trader was an item of some amusement and a fortuitous circumstance for the aborigines. Since the women gather oysters, the trading of pearls for the Malay objects of trade was looked upon by the black as an even greater bit of luck than the trading of shell.

The trepang (*beche-de-mer*) industry demanded more effort. In this activity the Malay showed himself a practical sociologist, for he again made no vain attempt to change Murngin civilization to his liking, but merely used the institutions he found among them to satisfy his wants.

Canoes were given to certain men who, with their clansmen, gathered the sea slugs from the low-lying sand banks at low tide. All this the native understood, since it was but one added particular to a general type of behavior; and although the blacks do not eat trepang, this animal belongs to a group of seashore fauna which are gathered and eaten, and could have been added to the diet without any change in the methods of acquiring food. But there is one element in the economic structure of Murngin civilization that must have made this adaptation somewhat difficult, since the sexual division of labor allots the task of gathering mollusk and other seashore foods to the women. Men only gather these articles of diet for their own use when they have no women with them and there is nothing else to eat. It is very likely that if the natives could not have speared fish or harpooned dugong or turtle while looking for trepang beds, the Malays would have found the industry unprofitable, if not impossible.

The Malay brought the tamarind fruit with him. The seeds that were thrown away sprouted, and now the lands where he voyaged are known by their growth of the tamarind tree. Many of these trees are very large. The circles of trees which surround the spot where once a huge tamarind tree had grown show that they are secondary growths and do not represent the earliest period of the Malay contact. No one knows how long the Malay has been making his voyages to Australia. The writer attempted to find

2: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1955
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[6] I would not say, however, that Thomson's material (1949) on ceremonial economic exchange fills many gaps, if any, in Warner's data (see Leach 1951:34). It is obvious, I think, both from his material and from ours, that exchanges of this nature between M.B. and Sr.S. comprise merely one element in a wide system of economic exchanges. Goods travel backwards and forwards through the network of cognatic relationships, against a background of linked and allied linguistic groups, in a traditionally prescribed fashion, between certain specified kin, passing outside the periphery of the Wulamba bloc into and from alien Aboriginal or European (or Indonesian, as before) channels. Such exchanges consist of specified objects or commodities, which move in different directions across the surface of the whole country; but this is only one aspect relevant to the total kinship system.

Also, I would agree with Leach (p. 52) that in a marriage exchange the equivalent of a woman is not only another woman, and that the equivalent of a woman may be found not only in goods and labor and symbolic objects. Certain intangibles can play a part—and these may involve prestige, rights, services, and perhaps status. Little work, as yet, has been done in consideration of these. Reciprocal exchanges between males and females, or between females, should also be discussed in much greater detail, for these are not just reflections of exchanges between male partners. It is not satisfactory to consider an EGO as being always a male, as has been done in most discussions of kinship systems. Where prestations occur between male and female kin, these seem to conform with traditional patterns; but between female kin (i.e., among the Wulamba), this is not so apparent.

[7] Radcliffe-Brown (1931:4–5) calls the local group a horde: he states that each horde is independent and autonomous, managing its own affairs and acting as a unit in its relations with other hordes (however, see pp. 28, 106). Elkin (1938:39–41, 73–74) discusses the local group: it is, he tells us, an enlarged family, consisting of a man and his living descendants in the male line; such a group can be a local patrilineal clan. Elkin then draws a distinction between the local group and the horde, which is as we have defined it above. In fact his statements would, I think, agree with our own here.

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3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 OII7 Murngin OII7

THE ART OF YIRRKALLA

The Saw-fish, Nalgun

Plate 127C belongs to the saw-fish, *nalgun*, totem of Milingimbi. Four saw-fish are depicted, two in the upper panel at *a*, *a*, and two in the lower at *b*, *b*. In the lower panel a fresh-water tortoise is shown between the tails of the saw-fish. Scattered throughout the drawing are small star-like designs which represent the star-fish, *midjala*. These fish provide food for the tortoises. The oval designs between the star-fish represent seaweed, *djiwul*, and the dots, its fruit. The two fish on the right side of the upper panel are called by the native name of *wungalbu*, and the three transverse cross-hatched panels, *c*, *c*, *c*, are sand-bars near the totemic place. There are three flying fish, *digar*, at the upper edge of the bark painting.

The Turtle, Wilitu

The totemic place of the turtle, *wilitu*, pictured in Pl. 127D, is an island called Nulgunin-nuna, situated north-west of Elcho Island. The triangular patterns occupying most of the surface of the bark painting are clouds created by the three turtles spraying water into the sky. Two king-fish are shown in the clouds, one at *a* and one at *b*.

2. SMOKING PIPES AND MYTHS

As far as I am aware the long smoking pipe, Fig. 59A, B, is used in Australia only by the aborigines of Arnhem Land and the adjacent islands.

Tobacco smoking was introduced by the Malays within the last century or so when they visited Australia during their periodical journeys to collect trepang and pearl shell, though the *Baijini* myth suggests that the aborigines may have become acquainted with tobacco at an even earlier date. After the Commonwealth Government, about 1910, prohibited the Malays from coming to Australia the aborigines continued to use the Malay pipe, smoking either a substitute or European tobacco, occasionally issued by white traders and missionaries.

In general, the pipes[70] are made in a few minutes from the pithy stem of a shrub (*Guettarda speciosa*). The aboriginal removes the pith with a thin stick, plugs one end with bark, cuts a hole in the side an inch or more from the end, fits a bowl[71] saved from the old pipe, and, except for the engraving, the pipe is complete.

The pipes I collected are about an inch in diameter and varied in length from eight inches at Groote Eylandt to thirty inches at Yirrkalla, Fig. 59B. It was necessary to have a longer pipe stem at Yirrkalla so that there would be sufficient room for the totemic designs. In use, Pl. 124D, the aboriginal takes a

70. The bowls of the early pipes were made of tin-plate and carefully treasured. Since the last war, most pipe bowls are made from shortened cartridge cases. As mentioned earlier, the aborigines recognize the difference between the *Baijini* pipes, which are similar to those used by Europeans, and those of the Malays. The *Baijini* were a mysterious group of fair-skinned people who once camped at Port Bradshaw, myth, p. 333.

71. Warner (1937), p. 461, refers to the smoking pipes of the Murngin, near Milingimbi, and Elkin and the Berndts (1950), p. 102, to those at Yirrkalla.

[Text continues on p. 391]

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 OI17 Murngin OI17

796 789 *Wawalik* sisters in their attempt to drive the serpent, *jurlungur*, or *muit*, back into the Mirrirmina waterhole (myth, p. 279).

THE MILINGIMBI LOG GONG

*532 *773 534 This incomplete myth, associated with the Milingimbi gong, *uwar* (Pl. 147A, C), and the designs painted on it, deals with a man, *Julpaipai*, his wife, *Gutjabaui*, and their daughter.

During creation times, *Julpaipai* and his wife travelled from Nilipidji (the famous aboriginal flint quarry, the source of the best flint knives) to the country belonging to the Liagolommira (Warner's Liaalaomir) clan on the Goyder River, where they created a sacred waterhole, Miaramina (Warner's Mirrirmina). Whilst camped beside this waterhole *Gutjabaui* gave birth to a daughter. Later *Julpaipai* sent his wife to Miaramina to collect food, and whilst there she was raped by a mythical rock python that lived in the waterhole.[24] As *Julpaipai* was making a fire to cook the food collected by his wife, he saw a dog chase a goanna up a tree used only in the women's ceremonies. Later, the goanna was followed by many spiders and a rat.

The central figure of Pl. 147A, C, is the man, *Julpaipai*, carrying a feather plume in his left hand. The lines radiating from his head indicate his hair. To the left of his head is a boomerang.[25] To the left of *Julpaipai* is his daughter, wearing a feather plume on her head and carrying another in her hand. To the left of her again is a wooden spear, resting on a boomerang. The animal near by is the rat, *marawata*, which the dog chased up the sacred tree, *warguritja*, shown immediately above. On the extreme left of the design is a digging stick belonging to *Julpaipai's* daughter.

Reading from the right of the central figure, the small beetle-like designs are the spiders, *dipala*, which followed the rat and the goanna up the tree. Near the right hand of the mythical man is his spear-thrower and two wooden spears. The figure to the extreme right is the woman, *Gutjabaui*, holding a spear-thrower in one hand a digging stick in the other. The design to the left of her head is a yam she has dug out of the ground.[26] Associated with the log is a ceremonial object, Pl. 147B, perhaps a beater, its painted designs symbolizing green ants, *tapalang*, and their nest. Myth and interpretation by F. M. Setzler and E. D. McCarthy.

THE LOG GONG, UBARA, OENPELLI

171 The log gong, Pl. 147D, was used in the *ubara* ceremonies[a] witnessed during our stay at Oenpelli. According to my informants, the designs had no specific

24. This myth has many points of resemblance with that of the *Wawalik* sisters (Warner, 1937, p. 250). Both the clan and the sacred well have similar names, and the woman, *Gutjabaui*, gave birth to a child near the sacred well. Later the woman was raped, instead of being swallowed, by a mythical rock python which lived in the sacred well of Miaramina.

25. Although boomerangs are not made by the men of Arnhem Land, they reach Milingimbi [439] from the south through the medium of a remarkable trade cycle. This trade cycle is described by Thomson (1949).

26. Warner (1937), p. 313, mentions that the log gong is 'painted with snake figures, emus and other animals as well as plants'.

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 Ol17 Murngin Ol17

ceremonial message sticks, they were all personal requests for food, tobacco and other goods used by the white man. I feel sure, however, that fuller research would reveal many more examples of the ceremonial type. 211

Whilst at Yirrkalla and Oenpelli I had to fly to Darwin several times on expedition matters. Each time I went one or more aborigines gave me message sticks to deliver to their friends at Darwin. My procedure (after I had made a record of the message stick either by a sketch or a rubbing) was to write the meanings of the various symbols on a sheet of paper, wrap the paper round the message stick and enclose it in an envelope, on the outside of which I wrote the name of the recipient as a guide to my memory. When I delivered the message stick, which I did on all but two occasions, I was able to explain to the recipient the significance of the marks on the message stick by referring to my notes. 211 202 177

(1) Yirrkalla

While the expedition party was at Yirrkalla we received a visit from a white man who, according to the aborigines, had bought their seed pearls and tortoise-shell, but had not paid for them. A number of aborigines carved message sticks, which they delivered to the visitor by hand to remind him of his debt. At the same time, the aborigines added a request for a number of items of clothing and luxuries in the forlorn hope that some day he might send them along. Before the message sticks were delivered, I was able to make rubbings of two, one from *Bununga*, Fig. 66C, and another from *Mungurrui*, Fig. 67C, E. 211 202 439

(2) Secular message sticks

On Fig. 66C, which is *Bununga's* message stick, the upper three lines, *a*, represent three boxes of matches, *b*, two blankets, and *c*, singlets. Triangle *e* refers to the nineteen shillings debt owing to *Bununga* for some time; *d* is a request for shirts, *m* for two fishing lines, *n* for calico, and *o* for tobacco. 211 532*

Fig. 67E is *Mungurrui's* message stick to the same white man. The central dot, *a*, is the white man, the recipient of the message stick. The triangle *b* is a request for a towel, *c*, *e*, *e* for loin cloths, *d* a new belt, *e* a knife, *f* a mirror, *g* razor blades, *h* two fishing lines, *j* trousers, *k* shirt, *l* hair combs, and *m* hair oil.

On the reverse side, Fig. 67C, the upper cross-hatched carving is pure decoration. The line *n* is the sender, *Mungurrui*. The triangles, *o*, refer to the money owing to him for seed pearls and tortoise-shell; *p* is a request for a bag of flour, *q* for sugar, *r* for sticks of tobacco. *Mungurrui* referred to *s* as the 'asking' line.[68]

Figure 66E, F illustrates a message stick sent by *Wondjuk* at Yirrkalla to his partner, *Baramala*, in the ceremonial exchange cycle of Arnhem Land.[69]

68. This 'asking' symbol is also engraved on Fig. 67C, *s*, *t*, *u*, *w*, *v*, *z*.

69. Donald Thomson (1949) has given us a full description of the economic structure and ceremonial exchange system of Arnhem Land. The stone headed spears, *nambi*, asked for by *Wondjuk* travel only in a southerly direction, while the articles from Yirrkalla, i.e. stone axes, ceremonial bags and feather ornaments, move in the opposite direction. The types of articles and their direction of travel are indicated in Fig. 2 of Thomson's book. [439]

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 OII7 Muragin OII7

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439

Wondjuk is asking his trade partner, *Baramala* (who lives near the famous flint quarries of Nilipidji, west of Blue Mud Bay) to send him a number of articles, including several bundles of stone-headed spears. This bundle of spears will be repaid, in turn, by articles which *Wondjuk* will collect in the Yirrkalla area.

The elongated designs, *a*, on the bottom of the obverse and the reverse side of Fig. 66E, F is a request to *Baramala* to send two bundles of stone-headed spears to *Wondjuk*; *c* refers to a ceremonial string, *purukuku*, of the *dua* moiety, in which white eagle down is twisted during manufacture, and *d*, a carrying-basket for *Wondjuk's* wife. The short parallel lines on either side are decorations only.

Figure 66D is a message stick which *Mauwulan*, one of my informants, asked a member of the expedition to deliver to a white man who had visited Yirrkalla previously. The message stick was a reminder to the recipient about a number of articles he had promised to send to *Mauwulan* and his wife.

The upper part of the message stick dealt largely with the requirements of *Mauwulan's* wife. The lines *a* are a request for two skirts, *b* two singlets, *c* a hair comb, *d* a mirror, and *e* a bottle of hair oil; *f* is *Mauwulan's* request for a turtle rope, and *p* for many fish-hooks.

On the lower panel, *Mauwulan* is asking at *g* for much tobacco, at *h* for a mirror, *o* a hair comb, *r* a knife, *j* a pair of trousers, *m* two short trousers, and *n* a belt. The four crescent shapes indicate the many moons since the articles were promised.

Figure 66G, H is a message stick I carried from *Wondjuk* at Yirrkalla to *Buramin* in Darwin.

One side of the message stick, Fig. 66H, dealt with goods required by *Wondjuk*; the other, Fig. 66G, those required by his wife. On Fig. 66H, *a* is a request for a mirror, *b* for hair oil, *c* long trousers, *d* a shirt, the multiple lines, *e*, on the left, many sticks of tobacco, and *f*, a number of blankets.

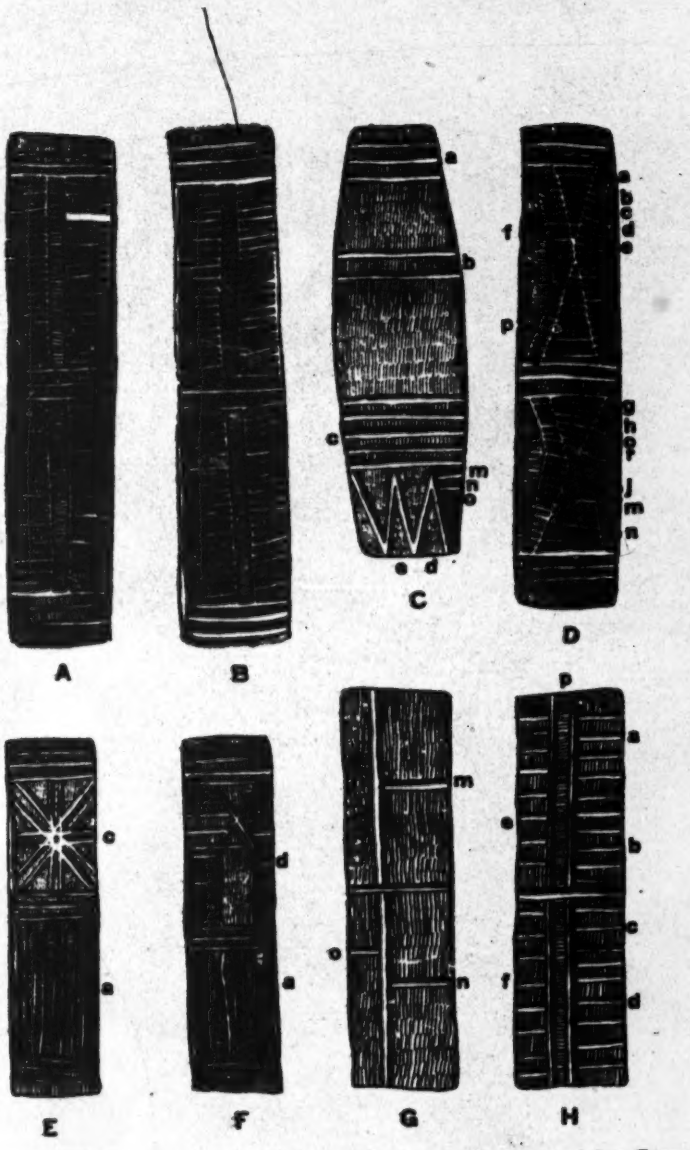
On Fig. 66G, *m* is a request for a skirt for *Wondjuk's* wife, *n* for calico, and *o* for a belt.

Fig. 67D, G illustrates a message stick *Matarman*, at Yirrkalla, asked me to deliver to his brother, *Malarapan*, in Darwin.

On Fig. 67D is the figure of *Malarapan*, the recipient. The meanings of the various lines are: *a*, two white shirts; *b*, two khaki shirts; *c*, one blue coat; *d*, two belts; *e*, two knives; *f*, two khaki shorts; *g*, two long white trousers; and *h*, a hat. The border of short lines is decoration.

The symbols on Fig. 67G (on which the figure of *Matarman*, the sender, is engraved) indicate the goods required by *Matarman's* wife: *j*, two bottles of hair oil; *k*, two combs; *l*, a looking-glass; *m*, two small belts; *n*, two dresses; *o*, a singlet; *p*, two belts, white; *q*, two more small belts; *r*, a pair of scissors. The zig-zag lines, *s*, *t*, *u*, *w*, *x*, *z*, are 'asking' marks.

211
*532
#139



Jean Traeon

FIG. 66. Secular message sticks, Yirrkalla
A, B Unidentified C Bunungu D Mauwulan E, F, G, H Wondjuk

coffin. The short lines around the skeleton are the maggots deserting the body and burying themselves in the ground to pupate. The two men are now water-birds; the coffins, the paper-bark wrappings of the corpse and the body of *Buma-buma* are natural features at Wialpa.

The Night-bird, Karawak, and the Opossum, Marungo

During creation times the night-bird, *karawak*, flew from Milingimbi to a hollow tree at Cape Shield, Blue Mud Bay, so that he could talk to the opossum, *marungo*, who lived in it.[52]

At specified times, the aborigines associated with the night-bird and opossum totems carve a stick, similar to that illustrated on Fig. 65A, B, and send it to the clan and language groups on whose territory *karawak* rested on his way to Cape Shield. The presentation of this stick is an invitation to attend the ceremonies at a specified time and place.[53]

Figure 65A,-B represents the hollow tree at Cape Shield on the top of which, every night, the night-bird and the opossum talk to each other. The day-time camp of the opossum is represented at *e*, *e*, and the night camp at *f*, *f*.

On Fig. 65A, the opossum on the left is ascending the tree at nightfall to keep his companion company, and on the right he is descending to sleep through the hours of daylight. The designs at *a*, *b*, *c* and *d* symbolize water-lilies which grow in the swamps near the totemic tree, and the short lines at the bottom of Fig. 65B, the scratches made by the opposum in the bark of the totemic tree as he climbs up and down.[54]

(2) Oenpelli

Figure 67B is a message stick an aboriginal, *Miljirina*, at Oenpelli asked me to deliver to his friend, *Jakinuramilja*, in Darwin.

The line *a* is *Miljirina*, the sender of the stick, and the line *b* the recipient, *Jakinuramilja*; *c* is *Tundara*, one of *Miljirina's* wives, and *d*, another wife, called *Marinja*. The lines *e* and *f* each represent a bottle of tobacco. *Miljirina* wanted his friend, *Jakinuramilja*, to induce his two wives, *Tundara* and *Marinja*, to come back to him at Oenpelli; he also wanted two bottles of tobacco.[55]

Figure 68E is the message stick I carried from an aboriginal, *Kainanui*, at Oenpelli to his son, *Pultadi*, in Darwin. The sender was distressed because his son had been drinking heavily, and was urging him to return to his father and

52. For the complete myth, see p. 302.

53. Warner (1937), p. 382, mentions that at Milingimbi similar *garrawak* message sticks are carried to both *dua* and *jiritja* groups notifying them that the *narra* rituals are about to start.

54. The symbolism employed on the bark painting of the night-bird and the opossum, Pl. 115E, is similar to that used on the message stick.

55. Tobacco was traded in small bottles. When we were at Yirrkalla the mission authorities at southern Groote Eylandt discontinued the issue of tobacco. After that prohibition, there was a regular trade in bottles of tobacco between the expedition camp and the Groote Eylandt Mission. The tobacco followed the same lines as in the ceremonial trade cycle described by Thomson (1949).

ASTRONOMY

Plate 156A represents the Magellan Clouds and the southern sky. In the lower portion of the central panel is the older sister, *Nupai*, with her dog, *widjigit*. The oval figure is the fire and the parallel lines are the burning logs. In the upper part of the painting are the younger sister, *Narni*, her dog, *gurni-gnai*, and her three children. The symbols of *Narni's* fire have the same meaning as those of her sister's fire.

The two women, their dogs and *Narni's* three children are stars adjacent to the Magellan Clouds, and the fires, two bright stars near by, possibly Canopus and Achernar. No explanation was given for the cross-hatched areas on either side of the central panel.

The Crocodile, the Opossum and the Ibis-men

There are two aboriginal constellations in Scorpio, the crocodile-man, *Ingulpi*, and the opossum and the ibis-men.

The constellation of the crocodile includes all the stars of Scorpio from 'the sting', i.e. Lambda and Upsilon Scorpio, to the third magnitude star, Sigma Scorpio, next but one to Antares. In the opossum and ibis constellation, Antares is the opossum-man and the two smaller stars, one on either side of Antares, Tau Scorpio and Rho Scorpio, the ibis-men. A small unidentified star near by is the camp-fire round which the three men are seated, the opossum-man blowing his wooden drone tube and the two ibis-men beating their sticks and singing.

When, in early December, the opossum and ibis constellation and the head of the crocodile constellation first showed in the morning sky, the aborigines knew that they would soon see the praus of the Malay traders who came each year, prior to their expulsion by Commonwealth law, to collect fish and trepang. The Malay traders left their own country in late November on the north-easterly winds and returned in April on the south-easterlies. The crocodile is associated in a minor way with the making of fire.

Plate 156B shows both the constellation of the crocodile and the opossum and the ibis-men. It also shows, in a rather interesting manner, the creatures themselves. In the constellation on the right of the painting the crocodile and its related stars are grouped in one design. The other constellation is differently presented. In the upper left-hand corner are four stars. The large one on the right, Antares, is the opossum-man; the two stars on the left are the ibis-men and the central white dot is the fire around which the three men are seated. On the left of the crocodile's tail, the three men are again shown seated around their fire. The opossum-man, the darker colour, is blowing his wooden trumpet; the ibis-men are beating their music sticks together and singing. These creatures are drawn for yet a third time. Near the hind leg of the crocodile is the opossum with his wooden trumpet, the nearby long rectangle. On the left-hand edge of the painting, in white, are the two birds.

5; Webb M-5 (ca. 1930) 1934
OI17 Murngin OI17

either for good or ill. Thus there are found few natural leaders among these people, a man's individuality being submerged in the life of his horde or tribe. This same fact, coupled with the extreme isolation in which this race has for centuries lived, has also served to stultify progress. 157 182 [614]

Only by a man of exceptionally forceful character could reforms be instituted, and life has consequently gone on practically unchanged for countless generations. 178

Toward those whose friendship has been proved these aborigines show a splendid spirit of loyalty. Those who treat them in a fair and friendly fashion will receive fair dealing and devoted friendship in return. 577

Arts and Crafts

The weapons and utensils used throughout this area correspond to the usual aboriginal type, but include a number of local variations. Little use is made of any weapon other than the spear, though clubs of several types are used to a limited extent, as also are boomerangs. 411

There are many varieties of wooden spears, barbed and unbarbed, some of which have the head and the haft fashioned out of a single piece of hardwood in a very remarkable way. Flaked stone spear-heads are much used, particularly for fighting, and these heads are traded over wide distances. [438]

The use of iron, particularly for spear-heads and cutting implements, has been known for many decades, this material being obtained in limited quantities from the old traders from Macassar. Only boomerangs of a heavy type are used, and these are by no means common. The light, return boomerang is unknown, as is also the shield. 177 411 439

Many types of "dilly-bag" are made, some of which are of such fine texture as to retain water. Others are highly decorated with feathers or fur woven in during manufacture. The material used in most cases is the split leaf of the pandanus palm. Other bags are made of string knotted very neatly and evenly in an open mesh. Fish nets are also constructed in the same way. 415 [285] [286]

Excellent string is manufactured from bark fibre, grass, fur, and human hair, and is used for a wide variety of purposes. Much of it designed for ceremonial purposes is decorated with feathers interwoven during spinning. Strong rope is made of bark fibre or grass, and used in the harpooning of turtle, dugong, or porpoise, and for the mooring of canoes. 283

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
OI17 Murngin OI17

173 538 But it is in the realm of the great song cycles and the stories which survive that a colourful picture of Malayan and Macassan life on these shores is unfolded.

175 At various sites on the north-east and south-east coast of Arnhem Land, at Arnhem Bay, Melville Bay, Port Bradshaw, Trial Bay, Caledon Bay and Groote Eylandt, these Indonesians of different types (not all true Macassan or Malay traders) founded their settlements. They built their houses on stilts, roofed them with woven leaves and fibre of coconut palm and even furnished them in an elementary way. They kept fowls,[2] fastened by one leg to the posts of the huts. Nearby they erected large boilers, and racks for drying the trepang, and out in the bays their ships were lying at anchor or being repaired. Each main settlement was a hive of industry, with Macassans and Australian Aborigines employed as labourers for specified payments. There were bartering depôts. Local natives brought in pearls, [439] tortoise-shell and other natural products that the Indonesians wanted, and were given in exchange East Indies currency, introduced foods such as rice and sweetmeats, or cloth, knives and tobacco. This trade was well established and its influences are still apparent today.[3]

The visitors not only brought goods from their own country. While they were settled on the mainland they manufactured pottery, knives, cloth and sails, and they kept written accounts of their transactions with the Aborigines and with their own employees. The effects of their sojourn are seen in some forms of 177 the local material culture. They introduced the dug-out canoe, [501] which has almost replaced the indigenous bark variety, and it 326 was from them that the natives learned to use steel in making knives, spear blades and tomahawks.

But it seems to have been in their diversions and entertainments, or in their ceremonies, that the Indonesians exerted their greatest influence on Aboriginal life. Watching them, the Aborig- [524] ines learnt to play cards,[4] and began to adapt their song rhythms 533 to alien tunes and the sounds of foreign musical instruments. Their mortuary ceremonies came to be associated with the de- [764] parture of the praus, and with Macassan burial rites.[5] The important secular ceremony of the carved *wuramu* figure, the

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
OI17 Murngin OI17

175 trend towards sexual excess and a desire for increased contact
177 with Europeans.

Such is the general outline of the conditions that have some bearing on our main theme.

177 During the Malay-Macassan epoch the Aborigines seem to have maintained a fairly well integrated pattern of culture, absorbing
648 or discarding new ideas without seriously disturbing its basic structure. The early Indonesians were to the Aborigines just
[439] representatives of another clan or tribal group not greatly dissimilar to their own, and so they carried on trade with these visitors, just as they would with members of other clans who had desirable commodities to barter. It was a natural outcome of this that the Aborigines should extend their traditional codes of hospitality, making their womenfolk available to the Macassan traders.[23] When the strangers were thus provided with temporary or permanent wives, the social organisation of the groups and the personal opinions of their members were adjusted to suit both parties – and so a delicate problem was settled. Occasional arguments and fights did break out between them, but these were usually regarded as being comparable to inter-clan feuds or quarrels.

[273] Once the quantities of intoxicating drink began to enter the settlements, especially during the last phase of Macassan contact, relations began to deteriorate. There was irregular promiscuity, women were bartered in return for goods, and quarrelling and fights became more bitter and more frequent. Stories relating the sexual excess that took place during this period show how strongly this behaviour affected the psychological makeup of the Aborigines. Old women of north-eastern Arnhem Land like to talk about the days of Macassan contact, and they contrast the uneventful period of recent years with the time when drinking bouts resulted in sexual promiscuity, and food and clothing were easily obtainable. Even the time of plenty that accompanied the Air Force occupation was not the same, they say, as the old trading days and the glamour of the Indonesian visitors.

177 When the Japanese and European traders came to this coast,
648 the Aborigines at first resented their intrusion. "Why," they
439 asked, "do these strangers take the place of our old friends?"

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
OI17 Murngin OI17

However, they wanted the trade goods that these people could provide, and so they made an effort to adjust themselves to this new type of contact and to take up again the old traditional form of trading to which they were accustomed.

But they soon found that conditions had changed. These strangers brought with them Aborigines from other areas, and preferred to exploit the wealth of marine products themselves, using relatively few of the local people. This, of course, restricted the distribution of trade goods which they had expected to receive in payment for their work. Large scale trading was curtailed and was almost entirely replaced by individual bartering. This led to general resentment and dis-satisfaction.

They discovered, too, that although these Japanese and Europeans required native women for sexual purposes they were rarely willing to compensate their rightful guardians and husbands, preferring instead to decoy native women on to their boats or (as frequently happened) to take them by force. These same visitors paid no attention to native codes of morality and social intercourse,[24] and preferred to enjoy variety in sexual relations rather than to maintain one woman over a period. Any reasonably attractive woman was sexual bait to these men, some of whom admittedly tried to seduce as many of the younger ones as possible. Such an attitude has not been confined to this north-eastern coast. Many Europeans and Asiatics alike throughout the Northern Territory regarded all Aboriginal women as potential sexual partners, a state of affairs which exists to the present day. The behaviour of Japanese and European traders, trepangers and pearlers was modified in some areas because of the wariness and hostility of the Aboriginal men. At Groote Eylandt, for instance, native women were to some extent segregated from men even in their own camp life.[25] But in other regions, as in western Arnhem Land, it was accentuated.

Conditions of this kind resulted in various "massacres" and spearings, which continued until the Japanese were excluded and European trading was curtailed with the advent of the last war. But this period of what might be termed mutual antagonism had one good effect, which must not be underestimated. It forced many of these Aborigines to avail themselves of their natural

9: Thomson E-5 (1935-1943) 1949
O117 Murngin O117

[396] voyages in the open sea, the matter is different. These craft 501 are hollowed out of a single tree. They have no keels, but are quite smooth underneath, and today are built without outriggers (although these are said to have been used by the Macassars), and depend for their safety and stability as much on the skill employed in their manufacture as in [435] the seamanship of their crews. These *lippa lippa* are unlike any other element of material culture and are valued greatly. 173 The natives say that in former times the Macassar voyagers 439 brought these craft to Arnhem Land each season in their 648 praus and that a prau carried as many as eight or ten *lippa* 501 *lippa*. When the time came for their departure, the Macassar men presented the canoes to the natives as part of their farewell payment, and this became a ceremonial occasion.

177 Before the coming of the Indonesian voyagers the natives 501 used only bark canoes,[29] called *bärwän*, and swimming logs, [396] and it was only after the introduction by the Macassars of the *lippa lippa*, together with iron tools for cutting it, that the Arnhem Land people began making wooden canoes for themselves. Much labour is involved in the cutting of a big canoe, and none of the tools formerly used by the natives of Arnhem Land would have been fitted for [412] this work. Although they possessed stone axes and shell scrapers, they lacked such tools as the fine, strong, relatively efficient adzes made from shell such as were used by the sea-faring peoples of Cape York Peninsula. This fact, and the way in which the wooden canoe was introduced, as well as its association with the Macassar voyagers, has given the *lippa lippa* a special place in Arnhem Land culture. But

[314] [29] The bark used is that of *Eucalyptus tetrodonta*, one of the "stringybarks", which is much used in technology. In addition to the manufacture of canoes, it serves for the roofing of houses and for the manufacture of certain vessels used for carrying water, as well as in the preparation of food.

It is this
ceremonial exchange cycle, and the rule that *gerri* from one direction pass to the opposite quarter, e.g. from *kumur kätjirk* and *kumur kärin* to *kumur miwait*, which provides the means by which such objects as boomerangs (*källi-gälli*), a conspicuous foreign element in the area, have come from a region hundreds of miles away. It provides the motive force by which bundles of stone spear heads, (*lirra ŋämbi*), have come north from the far-famed quarry at *ŋillipidji*, and dispersed throughout the territory. There is, however, some flexibility in this arrangement for it is obvious that a man who receives a ceremonial present from a partner may pass it to one of a number of people situated in a fairly wide geographical range. The natives refer to the routes along which *gerri* are passed as *dukarr*, paths, or roads[37] because these have become fixed fairly definitely by tradition. Objects of a certain type, such as boomerangs, although they are not manufactured in Arnhem Land but originate far to the south or south-west, may come by a south-western route along the Katherine River; from the south, up the Wilton by way of the Raimbaräŋa, a tribe of the interior, or they may come from the same source by a more easterly route via the Ritar'ŋo and Wagilläk clans, who, like the Raimbaräŋa, are interior people and are great rovers. (See map No. 2.)

This means that of a number of boomerangs manufac-

[37] The use of the term "road" for these routes along which objects passed within these ceremonial exchange systems, seems to have been general in Australia and Professor A. R. Radcliffe-Brown has furnished the following note from his experience of Western Australia:

"The way in which objects pass continuously in one direction (which the W.A. natives call a 'road') is illustrated by the presence of pearl-shell from the Kimberley District among the tribes of the Great Australian Bight."

tured by the Djauwuny' tribe about Katherine, some may eventually reach a man on the Lower Glyde River, from *kumur kätjirk*, while others may come via the Wilton River from *kumur kärin*, and others again may be passed from partners in the *kumur djalk* quarter, by the partners of Ritar'ŋo or Wagilläk clans. This means that two boomerangs which have exactly the same origin may eventually reach a man in North-eastern Arnhem Land from two *kumur* on opposite sides of his territory. But because of their associations, and the fact that they are characteristic of the west and south-west of his horizon, boomerangs are usually regarded as part of the *gerri* classed as *kumur kärin* or *kumur kätjirk* and not as *kumur djalk*, although they may actually arrive via this quarter.

Another example occurs in the case of *ŋämbi lirra*, the much-prized flint spear heads. As stated above, these come from a single quarry which is located at ŋillipidji in the hinterland of Blue Mud Bay. But while typically they reach a Mildjiŋi clansman on the Lower Glyde River, (as the most characteristic *gerri* of the *djalk* complex) travelling up the Glyde River by way of Ritar'ŋo, Wagilläk and Tjinba or Wulläkki people, some are passed to the northward, and eventually reach the Glyde River area by the *kumur miwait* route along the southern shores of Arnhem and Buckingham Bays. (See maps 1 and 2.)

Each man, within the ceremonial exchange cycle, acts as a clearing house for *gerri* of certain well-defined types, holding them only for a short time and then passing them on in the appropriate direction in discharge of an obligation to reciprocate a gift from a friend or relative within the system.

A man of the Mildjiŋi clan of the Lower Glyde River, North-east Arnhem Land, who may engage actively in this

kumur märnda exchange, gave me the following list of *gerri* which he received from each of the five quarters or *kumur*[38] which form the horizon of his exchange cycle. 431 439

(1) *Kumur miwait*, (east). *Kaiyit*[39] (iron headed spears) and the round black pounding stones used throughout Arnhem Land, especially for pulverising *ŋätu*, (*Cycas* fruit). This stone, which comes from the English Company's Islands, is called *poipuro* by groups as widely separated linguistically as Kopapoiŋo (and the allied Tjämbarpoiŋo) on the one hand, and Mildjiŋi on the other. Sometimes *ŋämbi lirra* (flint spear heads), which form the most characteristic of the *gerri* from *kumur djalk*, to which they give their name, may, as has been indicated above, reach a man in North Central Arnhem Land (e.g. a man of Mildjiŋi clan of the Lower Glyde River) by an easterly route via the roving Ritar'ŋo people, thence along the southern side of Buckingham Bay. [411 412]

[38] Mildjiŋi use the same name for these groups, but the actual word *kumur* (sternum) becomes *biri* in this language. [193]

[39] The natives of Caledon, Trial and Blue Mud Bays, on the Gulf of Carpentaria, have acquired much skill in the making of *kaiyit*, and the manufacture of fine spear heads has become almost an industry at Trial Bay. Even before I actually entered Arnhem Land I had been surprised to obtain on the Roper River, iron headed (so-called "shovel") spears from Woodah Island, Blue Mud Bay. I found it difficult to understand why iron spear heads should be passing down to the Roper from Blue Mud Bay, where there was no white settlement, where contacts even by sea were few, and iron relatively scarce and highly valued, into country where cattle stations had long been established and where iron was relatively easy to get. But the explanation of this was found later, in the discovery in Northern Arnhem Land of the existence of the ceremonial exchange cycle, which supplies the motive force for the great movements of *gerri* over distances of hundreds of miles, of which this is a part, and to which impetus was given by the coming [325] 182 177 431 439

439
431 (2) *Kumur muadäk* comprises calico, tobacco, blankets,
177 glass (the latter used for scrapers and highly valued in the
439 making of spears and other weapons), tomahawks, knives, belts, smoking pipes and other *gerri* of the type which are said formerly to have been obtained from the Macassars.
182 To fill the demand for *wetj* (page 78), and under the incessant
554 obligations of the ceremonial exchange system, these *gerri* are passed quickly to the southward—not so much under the urge for economic barter, as to fulfil obligations set up by the ceremonial exchange cycle and to gain the prestige, which the ability to send *gerri* of this order confers on the sender. For, while it will be seen that this fulfils a definite economic function, its basis is primarily ceremonial.

(3) *Kumur kätjirk*. A series of very characteristic *gerri*, some of which differ considerably from those made in

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172 of the Macassar voyagers which brought iron to Arnhem Land long
182 before it was known in what later became the settled country of
431 the Roper River.
439 The most interesting feature of this southern movement of spears is the fact that, today, when the position is reversed and when iron is relatively scarce and difficult to obtain in Arnhem Land in contrast with its abundance in the settled country of the Roper River valley, the passage of fine iron spear heads from Blue Mud Bay, which was developed under the impetus of the ceremonial exchange cycle, stimulated by the coming of the Macassar voyagers, still continues, although the practical need for it, the demand for iron spear heads for actual use in the Roper River area, must have passed, or at least must have been much reduced. The fact that the *economic* need which it served has passed, stresses once more the strength of the *ceremonial aspect* of the *kumur märndu* exchange cycle.
572 It must be remembered that partners within the ceremonial exchange cycle exist of such long standing that they have even become hereditary. These people send *gerri*, and these must be reciprocated with presents of the type long established by tradition, whether they seem appropriate or not.

Eastern Arnhem Land, come from *kumur kätjirk* across the Liverpool River. *Källämba*, (forehead fillets), *märbät* or *tjänauwo*, (woven "bibs" or aprons), hooked spears of the types *bäkkärämma*, *mat'tji'tji* ("biting bags" used to hold between the teeth in fighting), as well as *bärlatta*, (heavy fighting clubs).

(4) *Kumur djalk*. *ŋämbi lirra*, (*ŋämbi* spear heads), *källi-gälli*, (boomerangs), *kai'u*, (chain mesh dilly bags), and *ŋätjin* or *bulnyin*, (opossum fur pubic coverings or aprons made from opossum fur). So a *ŋämbi* spear coming to a Mildjiŋi man of the Glyde River travels from the quarry at ŋillipidji near Blue Mud Bay in Wagilläk territory via the Ritar'ŋo, (a nomadic group of *yiritja* moiety having a big territory in the interior of Arnhem Land).

(5) *Kumur kärin*, the chief route by which boomerangs (*källi-gälli*) enter North-eastern Arnhem Land, also provides hooked spears with bamboo shafts of several types made in Central and North Central Arnhem Land; belts of human hair of large ceremonial type—an iron-headed spear of special type known as *lämma* with a very short, broad blade that distinguishes it from *kaiyit*. Today (in contrast with former conditions[40]), it yields also *djimindi* (wire for

[40] The first source of such valued *gerri* as axes, iron, wire, calico and tobacco, for the whole of Arnhem Land, was the visiting fleet from the Celebes or elsewhere in Indonesia, and there is evidence that articles of this order were passed far inland long before there was any settlement in the Northern Territory. But today the order is reversed to some extent and a considerable amount of calico, wool, blankets, axes, iron, wire and fish hooks passes north from the settled cattle country along the *dukurr* of the ceremonial exchange cycle. When this *gerri* reaches Arnhem Land it is still known as *muudäk* because it belongs to the category of objects which came originally from *kumur muudäk*.

431 fish spears), iron bars or rods used for digging and for the
439 manufacture of spear blades, and especially *källämba*—the closely woven forehead fillets worn during the *kunabibbi* ceremony—which come up from the neighbourhood of Katherine and Mataranka and from the cattle stations in the south, by way of the Wilton River and Mainoru Station whence they are carried north by the Raimbaräŋa and
[552] Ritar'ŋo people. The tradition which lays down the *gerri* derived from each quarter is so well established that the name of the *kumur* serves also as the collective term for the *gerri* which characterise it. The flint spear heads which come from ŋillipidji under the ceremonial exchange system may be referred to equally correctly as *ŋämbi* or *djalk*. And again, any calico, wool or other material which is associated with the Macassar visitors.

431 It is an understood thing that no object is passed back to the quarter from which it came. Thus a *kaiyit*, an iron-headed spear, that came from the east (from *miwait*) is constantly passed westward, and must not return to *miwait*. This is so much a part of the tradition that when a man is asked for a spear, knife, or other object with which he does not wish to part, not infrequently he replies that it came from *kätjirk*, or whatever the country of the person seeking the *gerri* may be, with the inference that it may not return to the same *kumur*, and so averts the embarrassment of a direct refusal. But it is obvious that this rule is not inflexible and that in practice, with so many changes of hands, *gerri* may be dispersed widely, while still maintaining the general direction. This has already been illustrated in the case of *ŋämbi* (page 65), which, though having only one place of origin at ŋillipidji, may actually reach a given area, e.g. Mildjiŋi territory on the Lower Glyde River, by circuitous, as well as by the direct route,

brought articles of great material and social value, which gave a special impetus and furnished the "drive", not only for the circulation of *gerri* over hundreds of miles of country, but which did much to overcome also the organised "opposition" between clans.

These observations contrast strongly with the conclusions of Professor W. Lloyd Warner[48] who states:

"The trade with the Malays seems to have been purely on a basis of exchange, with very little else in its social content. Nevertheless it had little effect on the aboriginal ideas of trade . . . The native sometimes exchanges things he possesses for the things he needs and cannot get from his own territory . . .

"All this," Warner considers, "again shows the strong resistance of the Murngin culture to outside influence. The Malay trader came for an exchange of goods and nothing else; and it would be thought that, in the hundreds of years he is likely to have been in Arnhem Land, he would have given a new impetus to Murngin ideas of exchange. But as far as can be determined, the Murngin ideas are no different from what they were before he arrived . . ."

And again, after stressing the value of the iron axes brought to this territory by the Malays, Warner says, "It is unlikely that many iron axes ever reached the interior peoples." Of these axes he adds, "The substitution of the iron tomahawk (brought in as an article of trade by the Malays) for the stone axe can be understood, since the iron implement is a far more capable instrument, and a more important reason—the tomahawk was easily acquired and it was not necessary to learn how to make it. There was no arduous labour attached to collecting turtle shell to trade for an axe, for the shell came as a by-product to the pursuit

[48] W. Lloyd Warner, *A Black Civilization*, 1937, (pp. 458ff).

of harpooning turtles. The making of the stone axe took time and a considerable amount of hard labour; but to go turtle hunting was a pleasure, since turtle harpooning expeditions are not only for the anticipated enjoyment of the flesh and to supply the family larder, but also for the pure joy of stalking the turtle, spearing it, and bringing it home to an admiring audience which could appreciate one's abilities as a hunter and a man of importance. Undoubtedly pride of workmanship is felt by a native axe-maker. His fellow tribesmen always express their appreciation of a well-turned-out axe or spear head, but the social approbation given to the two occupations is completely disproportionate." 114 177 431 439

And again, in the continued use of the bark canoe by the people of Arnhem Land after the introduction of the *lippa lippa* by the visiting seafarers from the Celebes, Warner sees proof of the conservatism of the aborigine.

"The conservatism of Australian material culture is more or less demonstrated by the persistence of the bark canoe. Even today men who know how to make a dugout with outrigger equipment paddle their bark canoes across the open sea from island to island and from the various points of land . . ."

Professor Warner has missed entirely the tremendous importance of the impact of this Indonesian culture on the ceremonial life of these people in his review of Malay or Macassar contacts with the people of Arnhem Land, from which the above extracts are quoted. And in his remarks on the ease with which the native acquired iron axes, and his comments on the conservatism surrounding the continued use of the bark canoe he tends rather to over-simplification.

There is no justification for the conclusion that the cul- 114 177

114 177 ture of the natives of North-eastern Arnhem Land showed a resistance to the influence of this virile culture from Indonesia, and certainly none for the statement that the ideas of these people were "no different from what they were before he (the Malay seafarer) arrived . . ."

121 177 I do not propose here to attempt a full review of the influence of the Indonesian culture on the ceremonial life of these people, but merely to show its effect on the ceremonial exchange cycle and the economic system which accompanies it.

177 192 431 439 That this influence was extensive is proved beyond question by the fact (see pp. 67, 68f) that the term *muadäk*, which gives its name to *kumur muadäk*, the northern sector of the exchange cycle, is the collective or generic name given by the natives to all the *gerri* which they obtained formerly from the Macassar visitors, of which the chief items are knives, axes of the type called *luŋa linya*, nails (for fish hooks etc.), fish hooks and lines, bottle glass (for scrapers), tobacco, smoking pipes (*pämatukka*), belts, wooden dugout canoes, (*lippa lippa*), beads, (*männi-männi*), and material such as calico, blankets, string and later, wool, to which the collective term *mäthäkäl* was applied.

114 324 135 431 463 When Professor Warner contrasts the ease with which an Arnhem Land native acquired an iron axe from the Malays, with the labour involved in the making of the (admittedly) much less efficient and satisfactory stone axe, he overlooks certain important factors. First, that stone axes, like flint spear heads, are made from special stone which occurs only in restricted areas, and that while any man who merely uses an axe to get wild honey, can grind the edge, the implement itself is usually made initially by a craftsman, a specialist in the working of the stone who lives in the country in which it occurs, and like the smooth hard

FROM THE SOCIAL STANDPOINT THE CONSTANT
flow of *muadäk* from the Macassar visitors enabled a man of this area to discharge his obligations to those from whom he had received *gerri*, and to maintain and to build up his prestige. From the economic point of view it had the effect of stimulating the circulation of *gerri*, of maintaining a balanced exchange of goods, under cover of what, to the natives, is the vastly more important social and ceremonial relationship.

The orientation of the ceremonial exchange system as it still operates, with the emphasis on the "approved" or traditional *gerri* in each *kumur*, leaves no doubt as to the impetus which the coming of the Indonesians gave to the culture of this area. The people of the coast, who in former times came into direct contact with the Macassar visitors—and in more recent times, with trepang fishermen and casual seafarers—and who have provided the iron, nails, and bottles (for glass scrapers, etc.) for their exchange partners, are named from the special *gerri*, known collectively as *muadäk*, which they send as reciprocal gifts to their partners in the south.

It is not proposed to deal at length with the ceremonial aspect of this infiltration, and a single reference will suffice to show the effect on ceremonial life, which gives weight to the data which has been recorded, and of the value placed upon the *gerri* which were brought by the Macassar seafarers, as well as the effect of this on economic and social life.

The Mildjiŋi clan of the Glyde River has not only come strongly under the influence of these Indonesian people, but among other traits, has adopted a square-faced bottle, called *butulo*, and has elevated it to the level of a clan totem. Today the *mälli*, the representation, "the shade", the non-material representation or effigy of this bottle, is carved laboriously from solid ironwood, and is painted with a

9: Thomson E-5 (1935-1943)1949
OI17 Murngin OI17

Figure 2

102 Map of Arnhem Land illustrating some of the characteristic "*gerri*"
431 of each sector of the ceremonial exchange cycle and the principal
439 paths by which these *gerri* reach a man of Mildjiŋi clan of the Lower Glyde River area.

Boomerangs, coming from far to the south-west, as indicated by the arrows at lower left hand corner, may travel via either the Katherine or Wilton Rivers so that eventually they may enter North Central Arnhem Land from the west, across the Liverpool River, or from the south-east, by way of the Walker, Koolatong and Glyde Rivers.

Flint spear heads of a special type called "*ŋämbi*", which are made only at ŋillipidji near Blue Mud Bay, are shown wrapped neatly in paperbark sheaths called "*djalk*". Bundles of these spear heads enter from the *kumur djalk* quarter (south-east), or alternatively, by a more easterly route via the southern shorelines of Arnhem and Buckingham Bays. The typical way in which *gerri*, called collectively *mäthakäl* and *muadäk*, which were a heritage from the Macassar voyagers, reached Arnhem Land, and the route by which they entered the ceremonial exchange cycle is also shown. Numerous Macassar camp sites, at which shore stations were established, and where trepang was boiled and cured, are scattered along the northern coastline, notably at Arnhem Bay, Elcho Island and Miliŋimbi in the Crocodile Islands.

[End Map 2 (A)]

9: Thomson E-5 (1935-1943) 1949
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431
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[End Map 2(B)]

9: Thomson E-5 (1935-1943)1949
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ARAFURA
NORTH GOULBURN I.
SOUTH GOULBURN I.
Braithwaite M.
Bing R.
JUNCTION BAY
Bridge R.
Liverpool R.
BOUCAUT BAY
Cadell R.
KUMUR KATJIRK
KUMUR KARIN
KUMUR DJALK
KUMUR MINALTA
KUMUR DJADAK
N
EGO
(MILDJIM)
EACH INDIVIDUAL IN THE CENTRE OF THIS CEREMONIAL EXCHANGE CYCLE RECEIVES GIFTS (GERRI) FROM OWN (ACTUAL) OR CLASSIFICATORY KIN IN EACH OF FIVE SECTORS AND ACTS AS A CLEARING HOUSE, MERELY HOLDING THESE GIFTS A LITTLE AND THEN PASSING THEM ON IN THE APPROPRIATE DIRECTION IN DISCHARGE OF THE INSTANT OBLIGATION TO MAKE A RECIPROCAL PRESENTATION
Meinaru R.
Wilton R.
Roper River
Limmen Bight

End Map 2(C)

9: Thomson E-5 (1935-1943)1949
OI17 Murngin OI17

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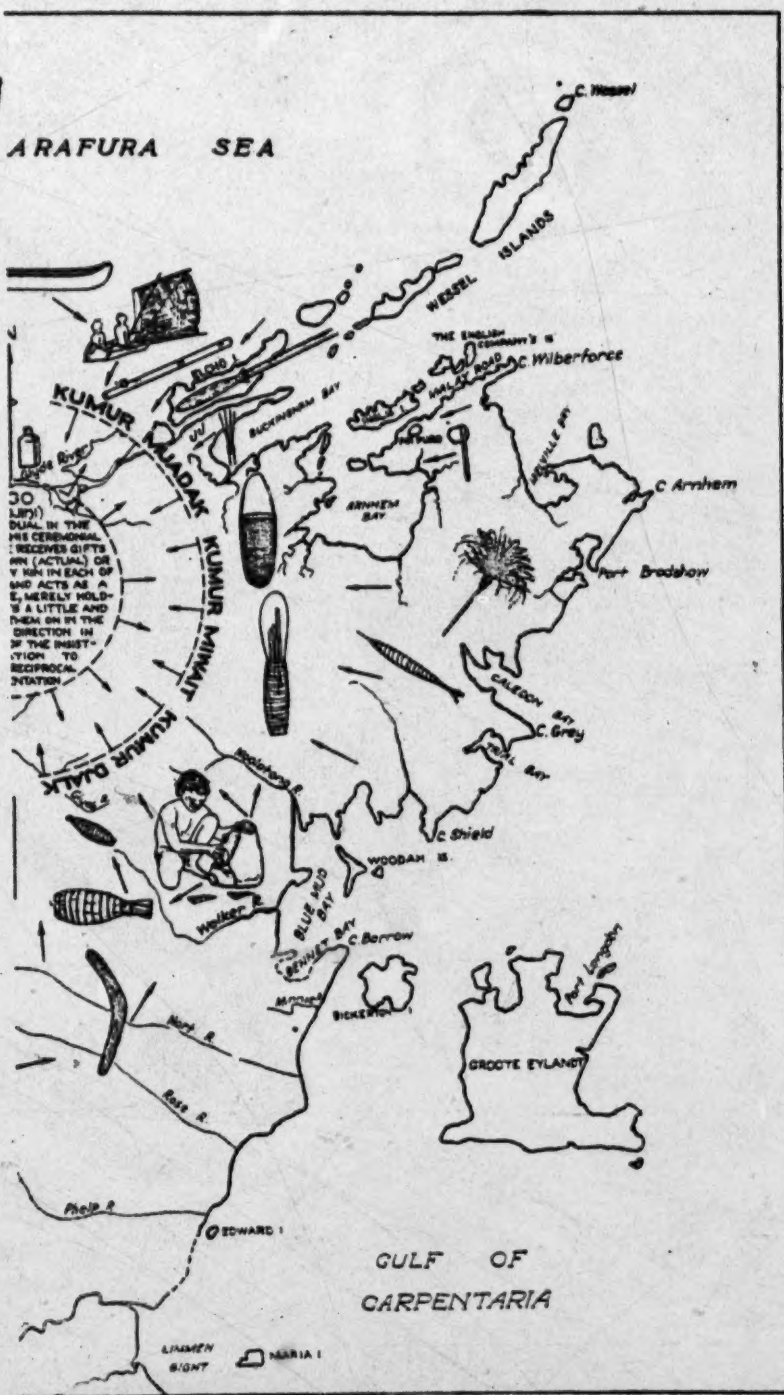

[Ewk Map 2(D)7

10: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1958
OI17 Murngin OI17

159 We Wangurri clans-people are a bush people (pages 16-29, 42). We are very strong and very fierce and good fighters. All the coast people are afraid of us. Our country comes to the salt water at only one place on Arnhem Bay (map, page 40). It was here that we saw the Macassar. They brought [439] us presents of rice, syrup, calico, tomahawks, dugout canoes, knives, and gin. We gave them pearl shell, pearls, tortoise shell, sandalwood, and other woods they use for medicine. We helped them gather trepang (pages 456-458).

159 273 439 579 At these times, when the Macassar prahus took down their sails and masts and their men disembarked, our old men drank plenty, for it was then they got all the gin they wanted for the presents they gave the Macassar man. There would always be big fights. In the morning you could see blood everywhere and many people were killed. While the old men fought with the knives from around their belts and with tomahawks, clubs, and spears, we children used to sneak in and eat the food that they had left. We always waited our chance and rushed in and ran away again.

159 431 609 I can remember one day my father's giving me some tortoise shell and saying, "Mahkarolla, you go and give this to that Macassar man and make friends with him so that when he comes again he will know you, and you will know him, and you will have a feeling of friendship for each other." I did. The Macassar man talked to me but I didn't understand him. I forget the rest.

159 574 Another thing I remember when I was very small: I went with my father through the Gwiyamil clan country to the Wulkara people for a corroboree. This is the path our ranga took in the stories we know about him, and those people are also Sand Fly people (pages 33-35), just as we Wangurri are.

159 857 Before we were circumcised we little boys played spear-fighting games, talked about sneaking up and killing a man, and we threw clay mud balls at each other. When it was hot in the rainy season we swam in the sea (pages 125-128).

Later we played being grown men and women with the little girls. We made little fires in the sand beaches. We went out just like our fathers and pretended to spear fish, and the little girls went into the bush and brought home bush food (vegetable food). We made little bark huts just like our fathers' and mothers'. The girls would come in and lie beside us as our wives and we were their husbands.

When we were little boys, others boys who were a little bit bigger joked us about the wives we were going to marry. This made me feel very ashamed. Little girls joked the same way. They also became ashamed. When we got bigger we weren't ashamed any more. We were glad.

159 867 I think I always knew it was wrong to "play with" a girl of the Yiritcha

10: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1958
OI17 Murngin OI17

159 the English Company Island, people who still remembered how to do it
[501] (pages 459-460). Some of the people came out to our boat by lying on a large log and paddling with their hands and feet. I got in the dinghy and went ashore with some of the people on the boat. When my mari saw me
[152] he cried and cried. Some people are like that among us black men. We cry when we meet people just as we cry sometimes when we tell them goodbye. I tried to talk to him, but I couldn't say anything. It was just the same as if I had lost my language. I had to talk to him in the sign language. I felt very foolish. I brought flour with me, but they did not know what it was.
[252] They cooked flour in paper bark just like they did palm tree flour.
[609] All the people were very angry with the white man for keeping me away so long, and some of them sneaked out in the bush and got their spears and clubs and were going to kill the white man. I said no, that it was no good. I said, "The white men talk very hard and sometimes they swear at you, but inside they are all right. Sometimes when they swear, they mean
[439] good." While we were there I got my people to make gifts of turtle shell and pearl to the white man, and he gave them hatchets and knives and calico. I got in the boat and started to go back to Port Darwin with the white man. Cape Don Tommy and the white man quarreled when we got to Croker Island because Cape Don Tommy wanted to sleep on shore. We got out at Croker Island and went by canoe to Cape Don. There I met that girl again, but her husband was there then. We went on to Port Darwin for a moon and came back to Elcho Island. Once more I went into the bush and stayed.

His Wives and Their Parents

159 Black men walk about single and by themselves. At first they have no
561 mates. By and by they find one that belongs to them. By and by children
828 come. White men walk about by themselves. By and by they find a woman,
825 and more children come out. The Macassar man was all the same.

Big old man kangaroo walks about single and by himself. By and by he catches his woman, and then there are little kangaroos. Opossum and fly and bandicoot—they are all the same.

Python catches his mate and by and by there are eggs, then there are children. Frilled-neck lizard, native companion, honeybees, pigeon, hawk-billed turtle, and all those animals—they are just the same.

Black men cut down trees and by and by little ones come up. Everywhere and all the time it is always the same. Walk around single, by and by a mate, and by and by children. There is an inside meaning to this. Some of
159 us old men who are not fools understand. If those two Wawilak creator
581 sisters had not done wrong in their own country and fornicated with those
828
773
825

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

nonchalantly remarked that when bush-rats spoiled most of the stores, they bartered fish, wallaby, and lily-seeds from nomads.

We saw white-washed aboriginal cottages built from locally burnt shell-lime, stones and ant-bed that had been standing for twenty years. Weird outlines of hands were in a number of bark huts, and an old nomad explained that when they 'go bush' they leave the mark of a hand in the house of a friend. Imprints are made by chewing moistened clay and spraying it from the mouth over a hand outstretched on the bark. When the hand is removed its outline remains in the centre of the white clay.

Indifferent land had been cultivated, and in good seasons yielded tapioca, sweet-potatoes, coconuts, and bananas. Nomads work in the gardens during the wet season and also collect bêche-de-mer from the mud-flats for export. Women weave baskets, fans, and trays from wild pandanus palm, and these are marketed for them by the mission.

At Goulburn Island I met some of the young Fijians who work on all these stations. Kolinio was a giant, a carpenter by trade and the son of a chief. He introduced me to the satisfying juice of the green coconut by gashing a lip in the soft shell of a green nut and handing it to me brimming with cold, exquisitely flavoured liquid. It has been inadequately likened to cold lemonade. Fijians get on well with aborigines and perhaps their colour is a link rather than a bar. They are born agriculturists, but need to unlearn a lot when they come from their fertile islands to desolate monsoonal Arnhem Land.

Milingimbi was at that time the end of the lugger trip. It is one of the many low scrub-covered islands and mud-flats known as the Crocodile Islands, yet within thirty miles of Milingimbi there is the densest Yulengor population in Arnhem Land. In 1918 this mission was begun as an extension of that at Goulburn Island. The advance seems

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

beast represented a potential feast. Tailing stock, and protecting them from dingoes whilst they grazed, was a foreign idea to Stone Age hunters, and if they were not watched, they would build each day a rough brushwood yard in the bush to prevent the stock wandering off for grass and water. Meanwhile the herdsman slept in the shade, and at sundown he brought the animals back to the station yards.

With two hundred nomads on the station, a simple system of sanitation was soon necessary. In the bush they never bother about this, for they live in small hordes, and camp in one place only long enough to eat the meagre food supply, and then move elsewhere. I have never seen Yulengor deliberately wash themselves, but they are so often in the water after fish or crossing creeks and swamps, that they do sometimes get wet. Their cleansing agents are sand and ashes in which they sleep and lounge, and these are fairly effective in removing body moisture and dirt. The predominating acrid odour in their hair, dillybags, and shelters comes mostly from the blinding smoke in which they cook, eat, and sleep.

Unfortunately most nomads take too readily to wearing left-off clothes. We did all we could to control the craze, and issued free soap and a yard of brightly coloured cloth to the men, and short skirts to the women. Our chief objection to the use of clothing is that it is passed from one to another, never washed, and when wet is allowed to dry on the body, thereby causing colds and pneumonia. Bush Yulengor wear nothing unless it be an occasional piece of bark or bunch of leaves attached to a waist-string. But when traders and adventurers introduced coloured cloth, blankets, and left-off clothing, they were eagerly acquired as ornaments, passed from one to another, worn till they fell to pieces, and except for accidental immersion, were never washed. Strange clothes have been seen, as when a man was seen in camp dressed in lady's floral Japanese pyjamas

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

bartered from a passing lugger. In church, the situation got out of control when a bearded nomad came in dressed only in a lady's pair of waist-to-knee pink drawers acquired in Darwin and bartered for over five hundred miles.

With refreshing independence older Yulengor remained aloof from the fashion of wearing clothes. Daughters of Wonggu, the husband of twenty-odd wives and father of many children, advised him to don a covering, but he naïvely remarked: 'Why should I wear clothes? There's nothing wrong with me; I have nothing to hide.' He walks about as Nature made him, except for two strands of bush string tied round his waist. When I asked him why he wore the string, he told me it was for chronic back-ache.

It seemed only reasonable at Yirrkala to preserve Yulengor culture, to encourage the revival of old ceremonies, and to stimulate in the people an appreciation of their own social organization which often has suffered from alien contact. It is unjust for any alien to come amongst primitive people for the purpose of upsetting their mode of life and converting them to living and thinking as he does; and there is no one so pathetic as a detribalized aboriginal. He is adrift from his own society and cannot fully enter into the alien social life he apes. However, it is not to be expected that all the Yulengor customs are harmless and worthy of a place in their social life; some practices lend themselves to development, but others, such as infanticide, have nothing to be said in their favour. The birth of twins is rare, but if it occurs, the mother or a relative kills one at birth or soon afterwards. We were told that one of twins in a Yirrkala camp was to be killed, and upon inquiry learned that superstition was the driving force behind the custom. It is true that in the bush a mother can scarcely feed herself and one child, and that if she has two infants then at least three lives are endangered; so it seems probable that infanticide was introduced in past ages because of economic necessity. But as time went on,

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

bodies. This glue is obtained by cutting a vein in the arm, painting the blood on the skin and adding feathers before it congeals. Paint brushes are made from human hair or from twigs.

I remember watching Wonggu mix his colours in shells, flatten his bark, and prepare his orchid gum. Only then did he realize that he needed a brush, so he leaned over and cut a tuft of hair from his son's head, bound it to a twig and commenced his mural.

A well-known anthropologist stayed with us at Yirrkala and obtained a big selection of aboriginal arts and crafts and bark paintings. He paid the Yulengor well, and they gave full play to their ingenuity, manufacturing such things as bows and arrows which, incidentally, are not used by aborigines. I saw several paintings in the collection in the usual red, yellow, white, and black, together with an additional vivid blue. Not having seen blue before, I could not account for it till later in the day my wife chanced to remark that several of her blue-bags had disappeared.

Body decorations are made by mutilating the skin, and one pleasing mutilation resembles a string of beads on a woman's breast, where each bead is a raised nodule of flesh about the size of a pea. Women and girls sear a pattern on the skin with firesticks, and rub pipeclay into the wound; a more common practice is to cut the marks into the flesh before filling them with clay. For reasons of vanity and custom, a woman has a few cicatrices across her hips, and possibly on her shoulders, and in the event of sorrow she adds some to her midriff. If a brother should die, a sister paints horizontal lines across the backs of her legs below the knees, and when his bones are being collected she substitutes gashes for her clay markings.

It was explained that a man gets a friend to cut the customary perpendicular lines from his shoulder and halfway to his elbow, but he himself makes the more important